

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 1889

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, UN TD

SUBJECT: NEW TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO AMBASSADOR TO
UNITED NATIONS SELECTED.

REF: RICH LETTER JULY 10 TO BURKE (ARA/CAR)

1. GOTT EXTERNAL AFFAIRS PERMANENT SECRETARY FRANK ABDULAH TODAY CONFIRMED TO ME CONFIDENTIALLY THAT IT IS NOW DEFINITE THAT HE IS TO BE SENT TO NEW YORK AS TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO AMBASSADOR TO UN IN AUGUST, AND NOT TO WASHINGTON AS EARLIER CONSIDERED. PRESENT UN AMBASSADOR, DR. SEIGNORET, WILL ASSUME ABDULAH'S POSITION AS PERMANENT SECRETARY HERE IN PORT OF SPAIN, THUS MAKING AN EVEN SWAP. SEIGNORET IS DUE TO ARRIVE HERE AUGUST 15 AND AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THEREAFTER ABDULAH WILL PROCEED TO NEW YORK IN TIME FOR SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION OF UNGA. THESE APPOINTMENTS HAVE NOT YET BEEN ANNOUNCED BUT PRESUMABLY WILL BE WITHIN A FEW DAYS.

2. ALTHOUGH WE WILL MISS HIS CONSCIENTIOUS EFFECTIVENESS HERE IN PORT OF SPAIN, ABDULAH IS VIRTUALLY IDEAL CHOICE FOR UN POST. HE WAS MINISTER COUNSELOR (NUMBER TWO) THERE ONLY A LITTLE OVER TWO YEARS AGO AND IS STILL FULLY CONVERSANT WITH UN DIALOGUE AND ISSUES AND NO
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STRANGER TO NEW YORK CITY.

3. FRANK ABDULAH IS FROM A PROMINENT CHRISTIAN EAST INDIAN FAMILY HERE. HIS BROTHER CLIVE IS ANGLICAN BISHOP OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO AND ANOTHER BROTHER WHO WAS FORMERLY WITH THE MINISTRY OF LABOR IS NOW AN EXECUTIVE WITH ANGOSTURA DISTILLERIES (RUM, AND BITTERS). FRANK WAS BORN NOV 8, 1928 AND EDUCATED IN TRINIDAD AND AT OXFORD, WITH AN M.S. DEGREE FROM THE LATTER. HE WAS AN ASSISTANCE SUPERINTENDENT WITH THE T&T POLICE FORCE PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE AND AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF THE WEST INDIES 1960-62. SINCE THE SEPARATE INDEPENDENCE OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO IN 1962, ABDULAH HAS CONTINUOUSLY BEEN IN HIS COUNTRY'S DIPLOMATIC SERVICE, HAVING SERVED IN KINGSTON, LONDON, OTTAWA, NEW DELHI AND NEW YORK (UN MISSION) BEFORE ASSUMING HIS PRESENT DUTIES AS EXTERNAL AFFAIRS PERMANENT SECRETARY IN 1973. ALTHOUGH MAINTAINING A TRADITIONAL BRITISH-STYLE RESERVE REGARDING PERSONAL MATTERS, IT IS KNOWN THAT ABDULAH HAS BEEN SEPARATED FROM HIS WIFE SINCE ABOUT 1972, WHEN MRS. ABDULAT TOOK THEIR FOUR DAUGHTERS BACK TO TRINIDAD OSTENSIBLE BECAUSE NEW YORK WAS NO PLACE TO RAISE CHILDREN. AFTER ABDULAH'S RETURN TO PORT OF SPAIN, HOWEVER, THE FAMILY HAS CONTINUED TO LIVE QUIETLY APART. FRANK DATES ONLY VERY OCCASIONALLY AND APPARENTLY CASUALLY WHEN IT IS CONVENIENT TO ESCORT SOMEONE TO AN EVENT. WE THEREFORE PRESUME HE WILL PROCEED TO NEW YORK IN SINGLE STATUS. FRANK'S NATIVE LANGUAGE IS ENGLISH, BUT HE ALSO SPEAKS SPANISH FLUENTLY.

4. USUN WILL FIND ABDULAH HIGHLY KNOWLEDGEABLE, CONSCIENTIOUS, AND BASICALLY FRIENDLY TOWARD THE USA. HE IS NOT OFTEN GIVEN TO VERY OPEN DIALOGUE, HOWEVER, AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO MAINTAIN A FRIENDLY RESERVE. WE RECOMMEND THAT HE BE CULTIVATED, HOWEVER, AS A COMPETENT AND FRIENDLY COLLEAGUE WHO WILL BE DISPOSED IN A QUIET WAY TO TRY TO BRING USG AND TRINIDAD VIEWS INTO COHERENCE WHERE THIS IS SEEN AS POSSIBLE IN THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO NATIONAL INTEREST.

RICH

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